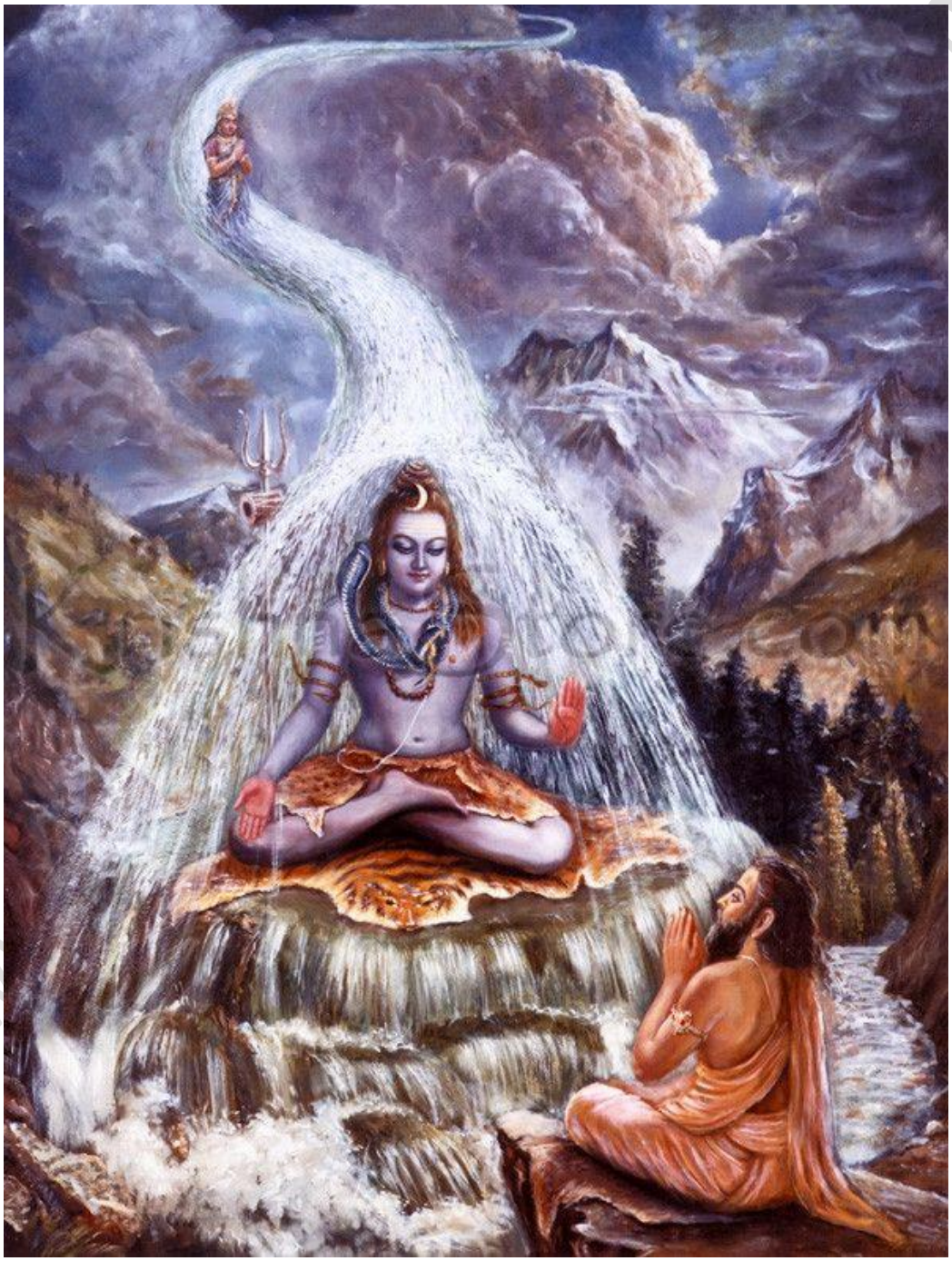
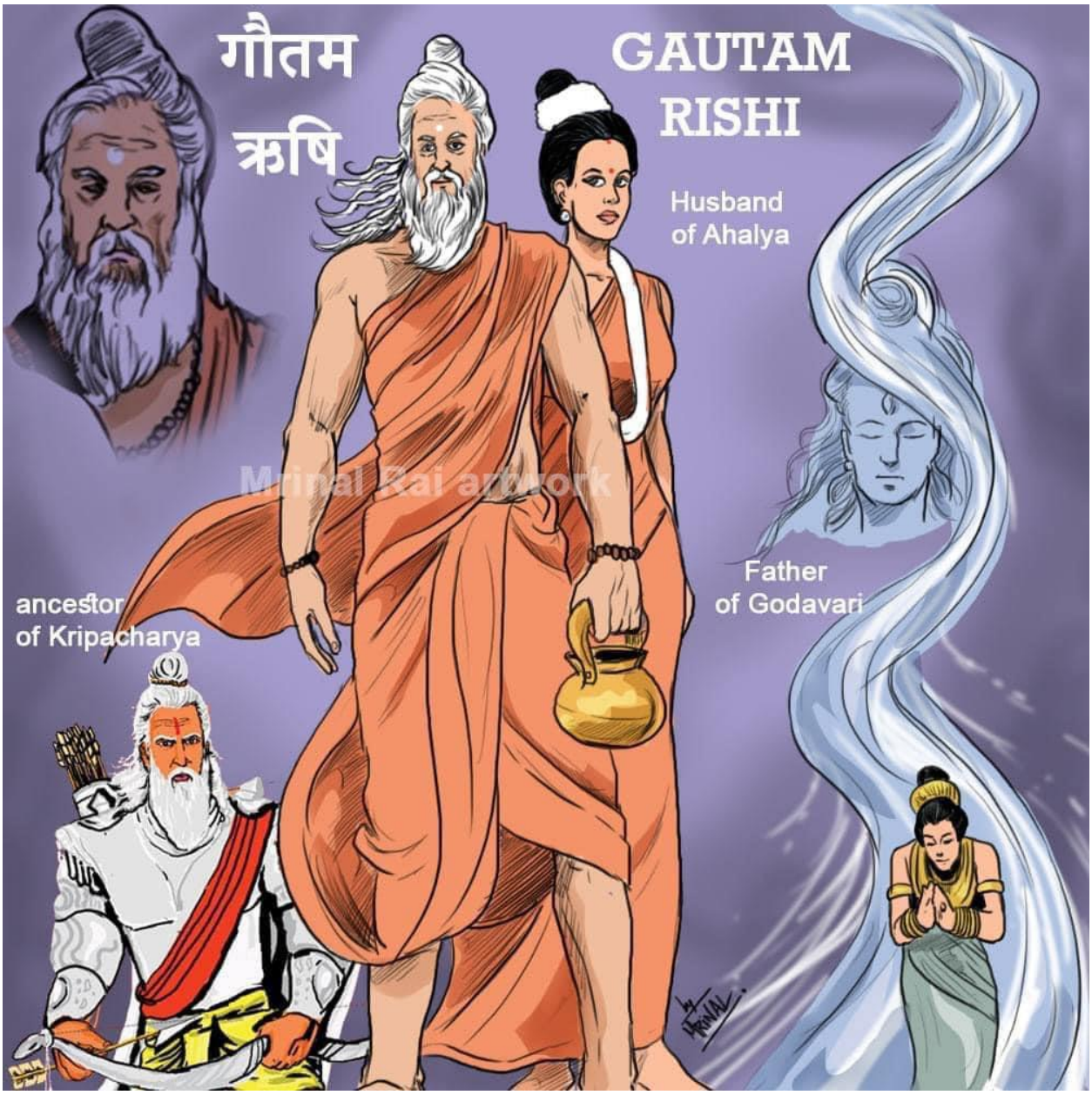
GODAVARI – The GOUTAMI GANGA



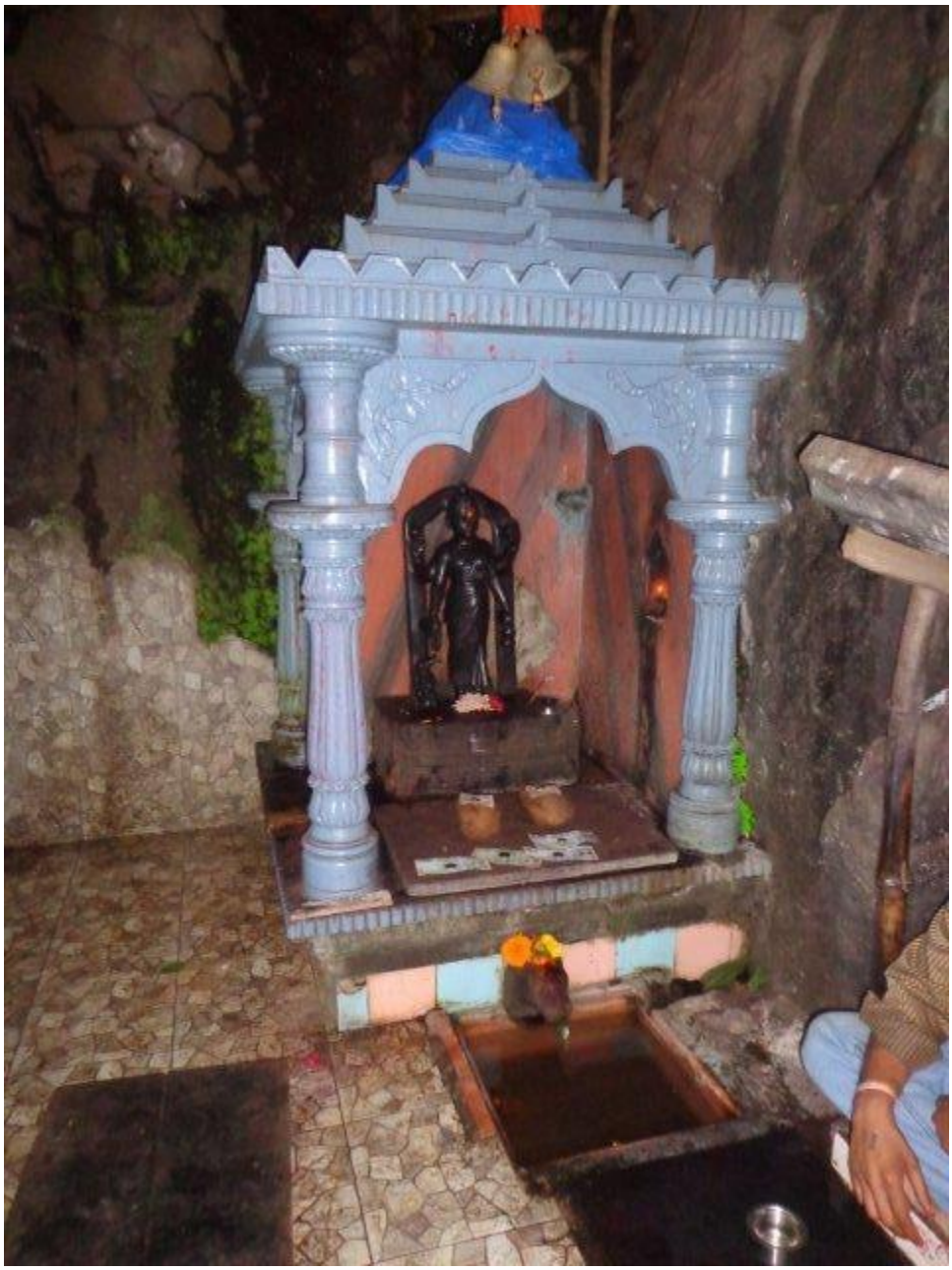


Who is Godavari?
What is its origin?
What are its other names?

Godavari the holy river is none other than Vishnu Paadodbhavi the divine Ganga that was held by Lord Shiva on his head (matted hair locks). A portion of it was released by Lord Shiva

due to the vigorous penance/efforts made by Sage Goutama to get rid of his Go-Hatya dosha.

Goda + Vari = Godavari; Goda means the one that has given life to the Cow and Vari means water; Godavari means the one that has given life (Praana) to the Cow (Go) from the divine water that was released (Shivadatta) by Lord Shiva.



When it was released by Lord Shiva it (Godavari) first manifested at a place called Brahmagiri on Sahyadri Parvatha (Western Ghats) and from there it started flowing downward through the mouth of a Cow (Gomukha);

Like Ganga became Bhaagirathi due to the efforts of King Bhagirtha, it also became Goutami since it was originated due to the efforts of Sage Goutama. Godavari is also known as GoutamiGanga.

Godavari is also known as DhavalaGanga. Dhavala means white, beautiful, dazzling white etc. Dhavala also means white Cow. Since Ganga (Godavari) flows through the mouth of a Cow (Gomukha) it is also known as Dhavalaganga.

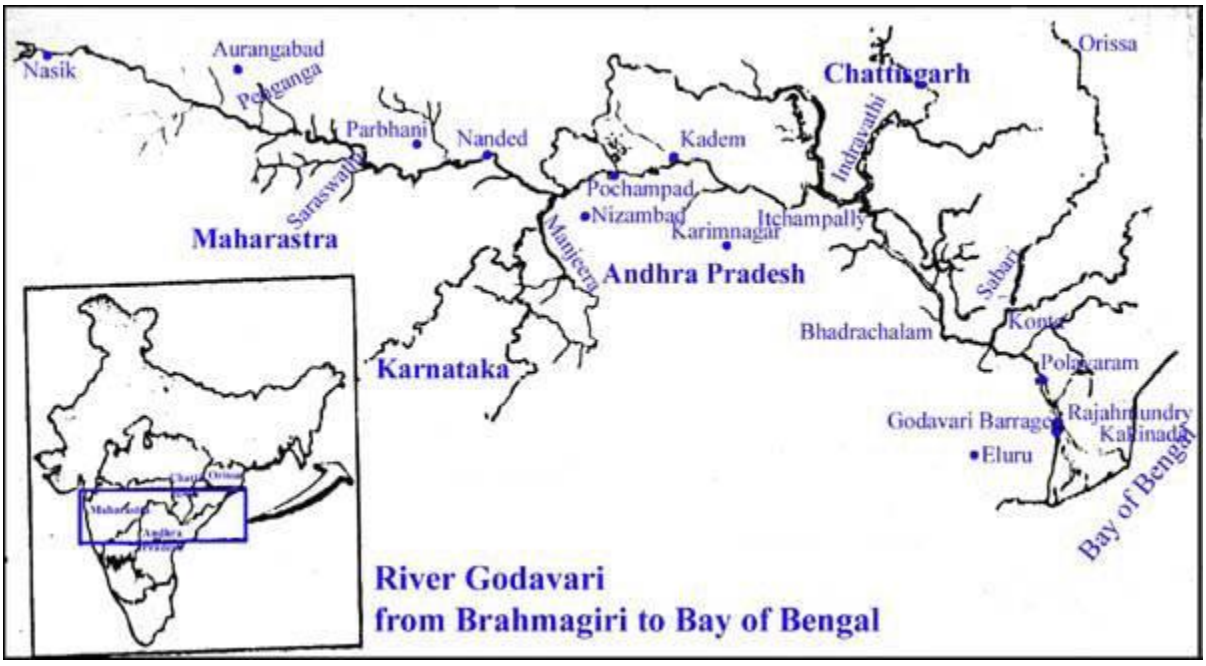
Since it is flowing in the South it is also known as Dakshina Ganga (Deccan Ganges)

What is the path of Godavari?

Where does it flow?

Which are the tributaries of Godavari?

Where does it merge with the Sea?



After taking birth at Brahmagiri in Sahyaadri mountain ranges of Western Ghats, Godavari flows down through the mouth of Cow (Gomukha) reaches Nasik (Trayamakeshwar).

After flowing in six districts of Maharashtra state Godavari enters Telangana State at a place called Kandukurthi in Nizamabad district.

After flowing in five districts of Telangana (Adilabad, Nizamabad, Karimnagar, Warangal, Khammam) Godavari enters Andhra Pradesh where it flows in the districts of East & West Godavari;

Before merging with the sea (Bay of Bengal), Godavari (Akhanda Godavari) splits into two major streams called Goutami and Vasishta Godavari at a place called Dhavaleswaram (Dhavalagiri) near Rajahmundry.

Vasishta Godavari merges with the sea at a place called Antharvedi (near Narsapuram) and the other at Yaanaam in Pondicherry. Though Yaanaam is politically in the union territory of Pondicherry, it is nearer to Andhra Pradesh.

It is said that Saptha Rishis divided Godavari river into seven branches and merged them in the sea individually at different places in Godavari Basin which are popularly called as Saptha Godavari.

The river Godavari thus travels a total distance of 1465 km from its origin (though the sea is at a distance of only 80 km) mainly in the states of Maharashtra, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

Including its tributaries Godavari Basin covers six states (Maharashta, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Odisha and Pondicheery) and one Union Territtory.

Godavari the perennial river is the second largest river in India after Ganges (Ganga) covering nearly 10% of the geographical area of the country.

Tributaries of Godavari…

Manjeera, Pranahita, Indravati, Sabari, Bindusara, Wardha, Pravara, Poorna, Maneru, Kinnerasani, Seeleru.

GODAVARI IN THEERTHA PRABANDHA (Sri VadiRajaru)

विप्रर्षिदेवकुलसंकुलतीरयुग्मा
विद्राविताघतृणरेणुकणा स्ववातैः |
स्वादूदकप्रशमिताखिललोकशोका
गोदावरी शुभकरी सरिदुद्धरेन्नः ||

अम्हांसि हंसि सततं किल रासि पुण्यं
सिम्हस्थिते सुरगुरौ न तदम्ब याचे |
गोदे समस्तफलदे दिश कृष्णपादे
भक्तिं विरक्तिमितरत्र परत्र मुक्तिम् ||

आदौ धवलगङ्गा या गङ्गाद्वाराभिधाऽन्तरे |
पश्चात् कुशावर्तपदा गोदा मोदाय सा सदा ||

viprarṣidevakulasaṃkulatīrayugmā
vidrāvitāghatṛṇareṇukaṇā svavātaiḥ |
svādūdakapraśamitākhilalokaśokā
godāvarī śubhakarī sariduddharennaḥ ||

amhāṃsi haṃsi satataṃ kila rāsi puṇyaṃ
simhasthite suragurau na tadamba yāce |
gode samastaphalade diśa kṛṣṇapāde
bhaktiṃ viraktimitaratra paratra muktim ||

ādau dhavalagaṅgā yā gaṅgādvārābhidhāsntare |
paścāt kuśāvartapadā godā modāya sā sadā ||

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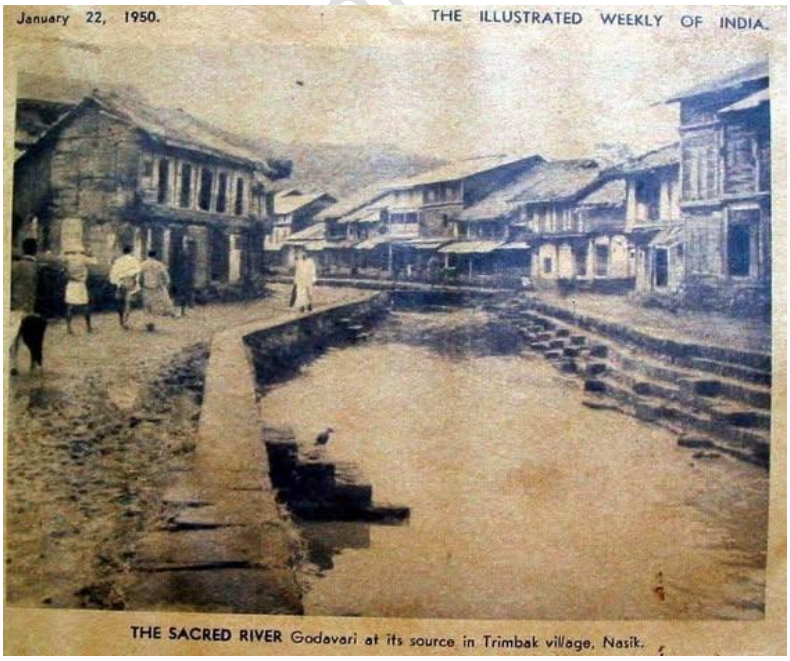
3. Godavari River : Godavari river originates from Tryambaka Hills, which is 25 km. away from Nasik Road station, on Mumbai-Delhi route. The river joins the Bay of Bengal near Rajahmundry, after covering a distance of 1500 km. *Padmapurana* and *Varahapurana* explain the origin and glory of the Godavari. It is the biggest of all the South Indian rivers and is also known as the Southern Ganga. According to puranas certain misguided disciples of sage Gautama, drove a weak cow to his Ashrama. But when the sage just tried to drive it away to save the sacred plants of the ashrama, required for the daily rituals, the cow collapsed. Gautama then prayed Shankara, and got Ganga flow over the dead body of the cow through Darba from the head of Shankara, and brought the dead cow back to life, Thus the sacred Ganga waters falling from the head of Paramashiva, that gave life to cow came to be known as Godavari. Andhra Pradesh is today considered as the granary of India, mainly on account of vast water resources the state gets from major rivers like Krishna and Godavari. Vadiraja sings the holy Godavari in 3 Slokas.



[GODAVARI at Tryambakeshwar - An old (1950) photo published in Illustrated Weekly of India]

Oh Godavari ! Brahmins, saints
Celestials and temples are found
In abundance on both of
Your banks, the cool breeze
Coming out of thy waters are
Quite holy and strong enough,
To drive away all our sins
Thy sweet waters quench
The thirst of all living around
Oh glorious Godavari, do please protect us 9

Oh Gode ! you shower full prosperity
To those who bathe in thy waters
The holy bath is all the more sacred
When Guru enters Simharashi
As holy Ganga along with
Three and half crore sacred
Theerthas are present then in thy waters,
But we are not satisfied with ordinary boons
We devotedly pray you to grant us
Detachment from worldly pursuits
Deep devotion on Sri Krishna
And liberation from rebirth again. 10

In the next Sloka, Vadiraja traces the origin and flow of the river in three phases in Triyambaka Hills.

Oh Gode, on the top of Triyambaka
Hills you are seen as Davalaganga,
You are again found in
Varaha Theertha and Narasimha
Theertha, as two separate springs
On the bottom of the hill, you are again
Seen in Kushavarta, where Gautama spread Darba
To take you to the earth, oh Gode, please grant us peace. 11

The famous Tryambakeshwara temple is situated on the Tryambaka Hills.

Pilgrimage on the Banks of Holy River Godavari

There are several sacred places of Pilgrimage on the Banks of the Holy-river Godavari which are worth seeing. Apart from the place of origin viz. Brahmagiri, some of the most important are….

TRYAMBAKESHWAR (Nasik)

Right at the foot of its birth place lays the famous Shiva Kshethra, Tryambakeshwar where Lord Shiva manifested in the form of a Jyothirlinga. It is a rare Shiva Linga which is unlike other is in small pit with three openings symbolizing the three eyes of Lord Shiva. It is the first place of sojourn for Godavari which constantly pours on the top of the Jyothirlinga of Abhishekapriya Lord Shiva.

NASIK

Panchavati Kshethra… It is strongly believed that Lord Sri Rama had spent part of his Vanavaasa (sojourn) at this place on the banks of river Godavari. This is also believed to be the place where Lakshmana chopped off the nose/ears of Soorpanakha (sister of Raavanaasura) and the place has derived its name Nasik from this episode. This is also the place where Kumbha Mela is held once in twelve years.

Pouranically Nasik (Tryambakeshwar) is one of the four holy places (spots) where few drops of 'Amrutha" (Divine Nectar) spilled in the episode of Ksheera Sagara Madhanam. The other three are Haridwar, Prayaaga (Allahabad); and Ujjain. These are the four places where Kumbha Mela is held.

BASARA (Basar)

In our country we find very few temples of Goddess Saraswathi which are of very ancient origin. Out of two such famous temples dedicated to Goddess Saraswathi one which can be easily accessed is at Basar in Adilabad district of Telangana State.

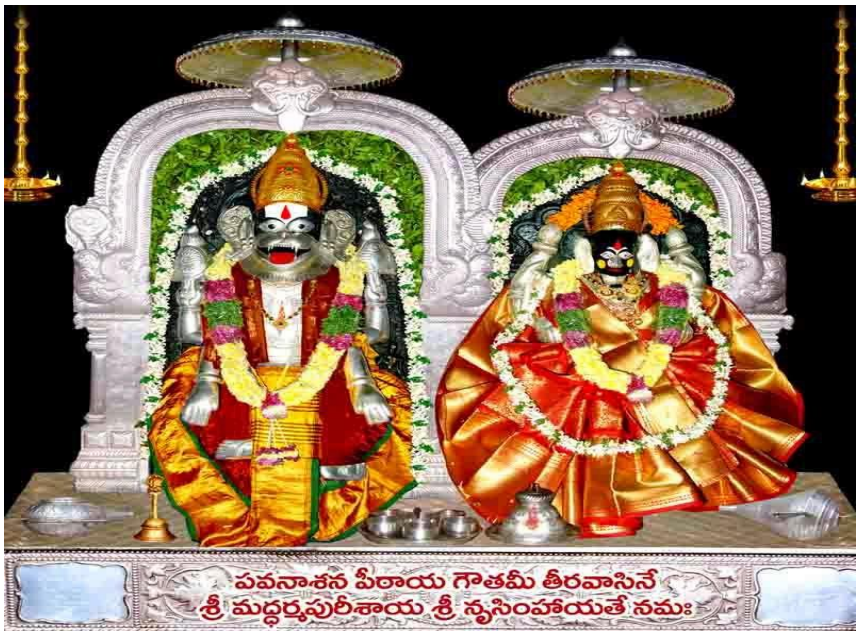
Situated on the Banks of the holy river Godavari, Goddess at Basar is known as Gnaana Saraswathi the one who bestows knowledge. It is the only ancient temple in the entire South India that is dedicated to the Goddess of Learning Sri Saraswathi said to have been installed by Lord & Sage Sri Vedavyasa. Rarity of this temple is that it is a Saikatha Vigraha (Sand made)

According to Sthala Purana it is said that Sri Vedavyasaru during his sojourn at this place in Dandakaranya on the banks of holy Godavari bought three handful of sand from the river bed of Godavari which miraculously transformed into Shakthi Trio forming three idols (saikatha) of Goddess Lakshmi, Saraswathi and Durga (Kali).

Though all the three Goddesses are present here; the place has become popular as Saraswathi Kshethra (Gnaana Saraswathi) which is famous for Aksharabhyasa formal induction of a child into education. Though the temple is located in Adilabad District, it is nearer to Nizamabad town in Northern Telangana region.

DHARMAPURI

Situated in Karimanagar district of Telangana State, it is a Naarasimha Kshethra dedicated to Lord Lakshmi Naarasimha where the Lord manifested (Swayambhu) as a Salagrama Shila. There is a temple for Yamadharmaraja the Lord of Death which is unique at Dharmapuri. Here Godavari flows as Dakshinavaahini.



KAALESWARAM

It is a famous Shiva Kshethra dedicated to Lord Shiva where Godavari meets its tributary Pranahita. It is located in Karimnagar district of Telangana State. It is a rare place where two Shiva Lingas are on a single pedestal (panivattam). They are Mukteeswara and Kaaleswara. It is known as Trilinga Kshethra; other two being Draaksharaamama in East Godavari District and Srisailam in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh.

Kaleshwaram is a Sangama Kshethra of holy rivers Godavari & Pranahita.

BHADRACHALAM

Dedicated to Lord Sri Rama and known as Dakshina Ayodhya this famous temple of Lord Sri Rama (Vaikunta Raama Kshethra) is situated on the banks of holy river Godavari.

Generally, we come across Lord Sri Rama depicted as dvibhuja (two hands) with bow and arrow. But, here at Bhadrachalam temple, He is seen as Chaturbhuja (four hands) holding disc and kounch in his upper arms; bow and arrow in his lower arms with his lower right hand in abhaya mudra.

Another rarity of this temple is, usually Lord Sri Rama is depicted with only two hands like any other human being with bow and arrow. But here He is seen with Chaturbhuja (four hands) holding disc and kounch in his upper arms; bow and arrow in his lower arms with his lower right hand in abhaya mudra. That is why he is known here as Vaikunta Rama or Rama Narayana where the Lord Sri Rama is in his original form ie. Lord Vishnu.

Named after Bhadra (son of Meru Parvata) Bhadrachalam is also the place where Lord Sri Rama is believed to have lived along

with Goddess Sita Devi during His sojourn in Dandakaranya on the banks of the holy river Godavari.

ANTHARVEDI

Located in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh Antharvedi is a Sangama Kshethra (place of confluence) where a portion of Godavari (Vasishta Godavari) merges with the Sea.

It is a famous Naarasimha Kshethra where Lord Sri Lakshmi Narasimha manifested as Swayabhu and is west facing on the banks of Godavari.

This place is believed to have been visited by Lord Sri Rama along with his brother Lakshmana and by Arjuna in Dwapara Yuga. Lord Brahma is believed to have performed Yajna at this place. It is also a Shiva Kshethra where the Shiva Linga is believed to have been installed by Lord Brahma.

As this place was Vedi (stage) for performing Yajna which was in between the Vasishta River it was known as Antharvedi. It is the last, the most important and sacred point of river Godavari.

Apart from the above there are several other sacred places on the banks of holy river Godavari like… Draakshaaraamam, Dhavaleswaram, Mandapalli etc. in Andhra Pradesh.

above list is only indicative but not exhaustive…

What is Godavari Pushkara?
How to reckon it?
What are its merits & significance?

Pushkara is a river-based festival celebrated based on the transit of Jupiter (Brihaspathi) in the zodiac. Accordingly, when Jupiter (Brihaspathi) transits in Simha Raasi (Leo sign) it marks the Pushkara of the holy river Godavari.

That also marks the Kumbha Mela at Nasik when both Sun & Jupiter are in Leo sign. It occurs once in 12 years. Incidentally this year it is Pushkara festival of Godavari and also Kumbha Mela at Nasik the birth place of Godavari.

Nasik (Tryambakeshwar) is one of the four holy places (spots) where a few drops of 'Amrutha" (Divine Nectar) spilled while it was carried by Lord Vishnu in the episode of Ksheera Sagara

Madhanam. The other three are Haridwar, Prayaaga (Allahabad); and Ujjain. These are the four places where Kumbha Mela is held.

Simhastha Parva at Nashik

Pushkara schedule for a particular river will be for one year; however, the first twelve days known as Aadi Pushkara and the last twelve days known as Anthya Pushkara are held to be highly sacred.

Merits & Significance of Godavari Pushkara

During Pushkara of the specified river all Brahmaadi Devathas, all Sages, all Pithru Devathas, all Theerthas in Bhoomandala including Ganga (Ganges) enters that particular river along with Brihaspathi and Pushkara.

This timing of their entry is considered as highly sacred and celestial that has the power to diminish even the ghastly and dreadful sins committed.

Having darshan, taking bath, touching Pushkara waters, drinking the sacred waters of Pushkara is considered to be highly meritorious and soul cleansing.

GO + Da + Vari; Go means Cow; Da means granting, giving; Vari means water (life force/praana). Godavari is the one that has made praana daana to the Cow.

In a spiritual sense Godavari indicates the geographical element and the direction while performing vedic rituals that we generally come across in Sankalpa sloka … "Godavari Dakshina theere" that means... I am performing this ritual by sitting to the south of the holy river Godavari.

It is said that, merits of performing Penance on the banks of river Narmada (Reva), death on the banks of Ganga, charity at Kurukshethra all the three put together one will get by taking bath in the holy river Godavari.

It is the sacred river (Godavari) that has washed the feet of Lord Sri Rama and got sanctified during His Vanavaasa at Tryambakeshwar (Nasik)/ Bhadrachalam and by Lord & Sage Sri Vedavyaasa at Basar.

Taking bath in Godavari during Pushkara when Jupiter is in Leo sign (Simhastha Guru) will fetch merits equivalent to 60000 years of Ganga Snaana Phala.

Pushkara is considered as the most sacred time to perform sacred rites to forefathers on the banks of the specified River and if it is Godavari the merits will be bountiful.

Godavari is called as Apara Ganga; by taking bath or even sprinkling (prokshana) the sacred water of Godavari one will get Go-Daana phala (in multiple numbers) and Aswamedhayaaga Phala.

Taking bath in Godavari river on the day of Pushyaarka (Sunday coinciding with Pushyami Star); on the day of Vyatheepaatha Yoga will fetch merits of Uurdhvagati to one's ancestors.

In simple, holy Godavari is ever auspicious, sacred, celestial and meritorious and when it is associated with Pushkara the merits are plenteous.

Saint Sri Vaadiraaja Theertharu has extolled the glory and merits of Godavari in his masterpiece Theertha Prabandha.

Let us pray Godavari Maatha to bestow upon Gnaana (Vishnu Gnaana) – Bhakti (Hari Bhakti) – Vairaagya (detachment from materialistic) on the devotees who take a dip in Godavari.

River worship in India is prevalent since time immemorial and rivers in India are adored on several occasions in the Hindu religious and spiritual calendar like Kumbh Mela, Pushkaram etc.

Rivers are an integral part of Indian economy, civilization and culture that has grown and spread along the banks of these rivers and they have become a livelihood for the people living in the country.

They have also played a significant role in the religious, philosophical and spiritual heritage of India which is known as Hindu religion or Hindu Dharma.

These rivers are Nature's gift to the mankind as water is one of the most essential elements for all the living beings. These rivers are standing as a living witness to the historical and pouranic

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happenings in India where several dynasties have risen and fallen along the banks of these sacred rivers.

Since time immemorial Hindu civilization has flourished along the banks of these rivers. Bharatha Desa is a land of perennial rivers and is the origin for several sacred rivers that have taken birth on this land with a divine background and purpose.

Maagha Suddha Dasami is reckoned as the avatharana dina of river Godavari.

Sri Krushnaarpanamasthu
'nAham kartA hariH kartA'
Hari Sarvottama – Vaayu Jeevottama
Sri GuruRaajo Vijayate

Related script on Godavari Nadi (PDF)

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